

E

241

B4F96

FULL & CORRECT
ACCOUNT OF THE
BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

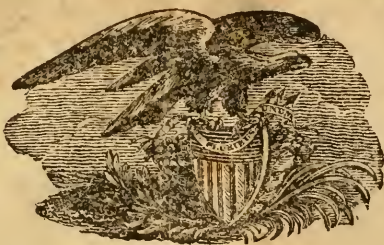


1825





June,



1775.

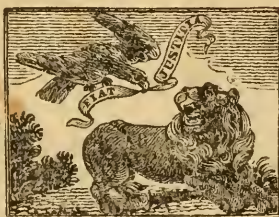
A FULL AND CORRECT ACCOUNT

OF THE

Battle

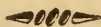
OF

BUNKER



-HILL.-

FOUGHT JUNE 17, 1775.



The Heroes who fought for their country that day,
Shall survive in the hearts of the worlds they have sav'd—
And till Time in Eternity's gather'd away,
Their Country will bless them for Hardships they brav'd.



BOSTON :

PRINTED JUNE 17, 1825.



0282F2
30 Oct 46

Ms. A. 9. 2. 49

E241
B9F96

5-6

BUNKER HILL.



"Let the Rallying Word, through all the day, be Liberty or Death."

After the affair at Lexington and Concord on the 19th April, 1775, the People, animated by one common impulse, flew to arms in every direction. The husbandman changed his ploughshare for a musket, and about 15,000 men, 10,000 from Massachusetts and the remainder from New-Hampshire, Rhode-Island and Connecticut, assembled, under General Ward, in the environs of Boston, then occupied by 10,000 highly disciplined and well-equipped British troops, under the command of Generals Gage, Howe, Clinton Burgoyne, Pigot, and others.

Fearing an intention on the part of the British to occupy the important heights of Charlestown and Dorchester, which would enable them to command the surrounding country, Col. Prescott was detached, by his own desire, from the American camp at Cambridge, on the evening of the 16th June, 1775, with about 1,000 militia, mostly of Massachusetts, including 120 men of Putnam's regt. from Connecticut, and one Artillery company, to Bunker Hill, with a view to occupy and fortify that post. At this hill the detachment made a short halt, but concluded to advance still nearer the British, and accordingly took possession of Breed's Hill, a position which commanded the whole inner harbor of Boston. Here, about midnight, they commenced throwing up a redoubt, which they completed, notwithstanding every possible effort from the British ships and batteries to prevent them, about noon the next day.

So silent had the operations been conducted through the night, that the British had not the most distant notice of the design of the Americans, until day-break presented to their view the half-formed battery and the daring stand made against them. A dreadful cannonade, accompanied with shells, was immediately commenced from the British battery at Copps' Hill, and the ships of war and floating batteries stationed in Charles River.

The break of day on the 17th June, 1775, presented a scene which for daring and firmness could never be surpassed—1000 unexperienced militia, in the attire of their various avocations, without discipline, almost without artillery and bayonets, scantily supplied with ammunition, and wholly destitute of provisions, defying the power of the formidable British fleet and army, determined to maintain the liberty of their soil or moisten that soil with their blood.

Without aid, however, from the main body of the army, it seemed impossible to maintain their position—the men having been without sleep, toiling through the night, and destitute of the necessary food required by nature, had become nearly exhausted. Representations were repeatedly made through the morning to Head-Quarters of the necessity of reinforcements and supplies. Major Brooks, the late revered Governor of Massa-

20

chusetts, who commanded a battalion of minute-men at Concord, set out for Cambridge about 9 o'clock on foot, it being impossible to procure a horse, soliciting succour, but as there were two other points exposed to the British, Roxbury and Cambridge, then the Head-Quarters, at which place all the little stores of the army were collected, and the loss of which would be incalculable at that moment, great fears were entertained lest they should march over the neck to Roxbury, and attack the camp there, or pass over the bay in boats, there being at that time no artificial avenue to connect Boston with the adjacent country, attack the Head Quarters and destroy the Stores; it was therefore deemed impossible to afford any reinforcement to Charlestown Heights, till the movements of the British rendered evidence of their intention certain.

The fire from the Glasgow frigate and two floating batteries in Charles River, were wholly directed—with a view to prevent any communication—across the isthmus that connects Charlestown with the main land, which kept up a continued shower of missiles, and rendered the communication truly dangerous to those who should attempt it. When the intention of the British to attack the heights of Charlestown became apparent, the remainder of Putnam's regiment, Col. Gardner's regiment, both of which, as to numbers, were very imperfect, and some New-Hampshire Militia, marched, notwithstanding the heavy fire across the neck, for Charlestown Heights, where they arrived, much fatigued, just after the British had moved to the first attack.

The British commenced crossing troops from Boston about 12 o'clock, and landed at Moreton's Point, S. E. from Breed's Hill. At 2 o'clock, from the best accounts that can be obtained, they had landed between 3 and 4,000 men, under the immediate command of Gen. Howe, and formed, in apparently invincible order, at the base of the hill.

The Position of the Americans at this time was a redoubt on the summit of the height of about eight rods square, and a breastwork, extending on the left of it, about seventy feet down the eastern declivity of the hill. This redoubt and breastwork was commanded by Prescott in person, who had superintended its construction, and who occupied it with the Mass. militia of his detachment and a part of Little's regiment, which had arrived about one o'clock. They were dreadfully deficient in equipments and ammunition, had been toiling incessantly for many hours, and it is said by some accounts even then were destitute of provisions.—A little to the eastward of the Redoubt, and northerly to the rear of it, was a rail fence, extending almost to Mystick river,—to this fence another had been added during the night and forenoon, and some newly mown grass thrown against them to afford something like a cover to the troops.—At this fence the 120 Connecticut militia were posted.

The movements of the British made it evident their intention was to march a strong column along the margin of the Mystick and turn the redoubt on the North, while another column attacked it in front,—accordingly to prevent this design a large force became necessary at the breastwork and rail fence. The whole of the reinforcements that arrived, amounting in all to about 800 or 1000

men, were ordered by Gen. Putnam, who had been extremely active throughout the night and morning, and who had accompanied the expedition, to this point.

At this moment thousands of persons of both sexes had collected on the Church Steeples, Beacon Hill, House Tops, and every place in Boston & its neighbourhood where a view of the battle-ground could be obtained, viewing, with painful anxiety, the movements of the combatants—wondering, yet admiring, the bold stand of the Americans, and trembling at the thoughts of the formidable army marshalled in array against them.

THE BATTLE.

Before 3 o'clock the British formed, in two columns, for the attack—one column, as had been anticipated, moved along the Mystic River with the intention of taking the Redoubt in the rear, while the other advanced up the ascent directly in front of the Redoubt, where Prescott was ready to receive them. Gen. Warren, President of the Provincial Congress and of the Committee of Safety, who had been appointed but a few days before a Major-General in the Mass. troops, had volunteered on the occasion as a private soldier, and was in the redoubt with a musket, animating the men, by his influence and example, to the most daring determination.

Orders were given to the Americans to reserve their fire till the enemy advanced sufficiently near to make their aim certain. Several volleys were fired by the British with but little success; and so long a time had elapsed, and the British were allowed to advance so near the Americans without their fire being returned, that a doubt arose whether or not the latter intended to give battle—but the fatal moment soon arrived:—when the British had advanced to within about eight rods, a sheet of fire was poured upon them and continued a short time with such deadly effect that hundreds of the assailants lay weltering in their blood, and the remainder retreated in dismay to the point where they had first landed.

From day-light to the time of the British advancing on the works, an incessant fire had been kept up on the Americans from the Ships and Batteries—this fire was now renewed with increased vigour.

After a short time the British officers had succeeded in rallying their men, and again advanced, in the same order as before, to the attack. Thinking to divert the attention of the Americans, the town of Charlestown, consisting of 500 wooden buildings, was now set on fire by the British—the roar of the flames, the crashing of falling timbers, the awful appearance of desolation presented, the dreadful shrieks of the dying and the wounded in the last attack, added to the knowledge of the formidable force advancing against them, combined to form a scene apparently too much for men bred in the quiet retirement of domestic life to sustain—but the stillness of death reigned within the American works—and nought could be seen but the deadly presented weapon, ready to hurl fresh destruction on the assailants. The fire of the Americans was again reserved till the British came still nearer than before, when the same unerring aim was taken, and the British shrunk, terrified,

from before its fatal effects, flying, completely routed, a second time, to the banks of the river, and leaving, as before, the field strewn with their wounded and their dead.

Again the ships and batteries renewed their fire, and kept a continual shower of balls and shells on the works. Notwithstanding every exertion, the British officers found it impossible to rally the men for a third attack; one third of their comrades had fallen; and finally it was not till a reinforcement of more than 1000 fresh troops, with a strong park of artillery, had joined them from Boston, that they could be induced to form anew.

In the mean time every effort was made on the part of the Americans to resist a third attack; Gen. Putnam rode, notwithstanding the heavy fire of the ships and batteries, several times across the neck to induce the Militia to advance, but it was only a few of the resolute and brave who would encounter the storm. The British receiving reinforcements from their formidable main body—the town of Charlestown presenting one wide scene of destruction—the probability the Americans must shortly retreat—the shower of balls pouring over the neck—presented obstacles too appalling for raw troops to sustain, and embodied too much danger to allow them to encounter.—Yet, notwithstanding all this, the Americans on the Heights were elated with their success, and waited with coolness and determination the now formidable advance of the enemy.

Once more the British, aided by their reinforcements, advanced to the attack, but with great skill and caution—their artillery was planted on the eastern declivity of the hill, between the rail fence and the breastwork, where it was directed along the line of the Americans stationed at the latter place, and against the gate-way on the north-eastern corner of the redoubt—at the same time they attacked the redoubt on the south-eastern and south-western sides and entered it with fixed bayonets. The slaughter on their advancing was great; but the Americans not having bayonets to meet them on equal terms, and their powder being exhausted, now slowly retreated, opposing and extricating themselves from the British with the butts of their pieces.

The column that advanced against the rail fence was received in the most dauntless manner. The Americans fought with a spirit and heroism that could not be surpassed, and had their ammunition have held out, would have secured to themselves a third time the palm of victory; as it was, they effectually prevented the enemy from accomplishing his purpose, which was to turn their flank and cut the whole of the Americans off; but having become perfectly exhausted, this body of the Americans also slowly retired, retreating in much better order than could possibly have been expected from undisciplined troops, and those in the redoubt having extricated themselves from a host of bayonets by which they had been surrounded.

The British followed the Americans to Bunker Hill, but some fresh Militia at this moment coming up to the aid of the latter, covered their retreat. The Americans crossed Charlestown Neck about 7 o'clock, having in the last twenty hours performed deeds which seem almost impossible. Some of them proceeded to Cambridge and others posted themselves quietly on Winter and Prospect Hills.

From the most accurate statements that can be found, it appears the British must have had near 5,000 soldiers in the battle; between 3 and 4,000 having first landed, and the reinforcement amounting to over 1,000. The Americans, throughout the whole day, did not have 2,000 men on the field.

The slaughter on the side of the British was immense, having had nearly 1500 killed and wounded; twelve hundred of which were either killed or mortally wounded,—the Americans about 400—among whom the country had to lament the brave and patriotic WARREN,—he fell, near the Redoubt, shot by a musket ball through the head, some time after the word was given to retreat, and immediately expired.

Such was the Battle of Bunker Hill. The deeds of valor performed on that day will fill one of the brightest pages of history, and be remembered with veneration and pride, ages after the Monument now to be erected, and the Heroes who performed them, shall have crumbled into dust—these deeds formed the foundation of American Independence—the blood of WARREN and of the other Heroes that fell consecrated the Corner Stone, and Posterity, in days long to come, will revere and bless the names of the Patriots who conceived and sustained it.

Had the Commanders at Charlestown Heights become terrified on being cut off from their main body and supplies, and surrendered their army, or even retreated before they did, from the terrific force that opposed them, where would have now been that ornament and example to the world, the Independence of the United States.—When it was found that no reinforcements were to be allowed them, the most sanguine man on that field could not have even indulged a hope of success, but all determined to deserve it—and although they did not obtain a victory, their example was the cause of a great many.—The first attempt on the commencement of a war is held up, by one party or the other, as an example to those that succeed it, and a Victory or Defeat, though not, perhaps, of any great magnitude in itself, is most powerful and important in its effects. Had such conduct as was here exhibited, been in any degree imitated by the immediate Commander in the first military onset of the last war, how truly different a result would have been effected to the fatal one that terminated that unfortunate expedition.

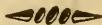
From the immense superiority of the British at this stage of the war, having a large army of highly disciplined and well equipped troops, and the Americans possessing but few other munitions or weapons of war, and but little more discipline, than what each man possessed when he threw aside his plough and took the gun that he had kept for pastime or for profit, but now to be employed for a different purpose, from off the hooks that held it,—perhaps it would have been in their power, by pursuing the Americans to Cambridge, and destroying the few stores that had been collected there, to implant a blow which could have never been recovered from, but they were completely terrified. The awful lesson they had just received, filled them with horror, and the blood of 1500 of their companions who fell on that day, presented to them a warning which they could never forget.—From the Battle of Bunker Hill sprung the protection and the vigor that nurtured the Tree of Liberty, and to it, in all probability, may be ascribed our Independence and Glory.

The name of the first Martyr that gave his life for the good of his country on that day, in the importance of the moment was lost, else a Monument, in connection with the gallant Warren, should be raised to his memory. The manner of his death was thus related by Colonel Prescott :

“The first man that fell in the Battle of Bunker Hill was killed by a Cannon Ball, which struck his head. He was so near me that my clothes were besmeared with his blood and brains, which I wiped off, in some degree, with a handful of fresh earth. The sight was so shocking to many of the men, that they left their posts and ran to view him. I ordered them back, but in vain. I then or-

dered him to be buried instantiy. A subaltern officer expressed surprise that I should allow him to be buried without having prayers said ; I replied, this is the first man that has been killed, and the only one that will be buried to-day. I put him out of sight that the men may be kept in their places. God only knows who, or how many of us, will fall before it is over. To your post, my good fellow, and let each man do his duty."

The name of the Patriot who thus fell is supposed to have been POLLARD, a young man belonging to Billerica.—He was struck by a Cannon Ball thrown from the Line-of-battle-ship Somerset.

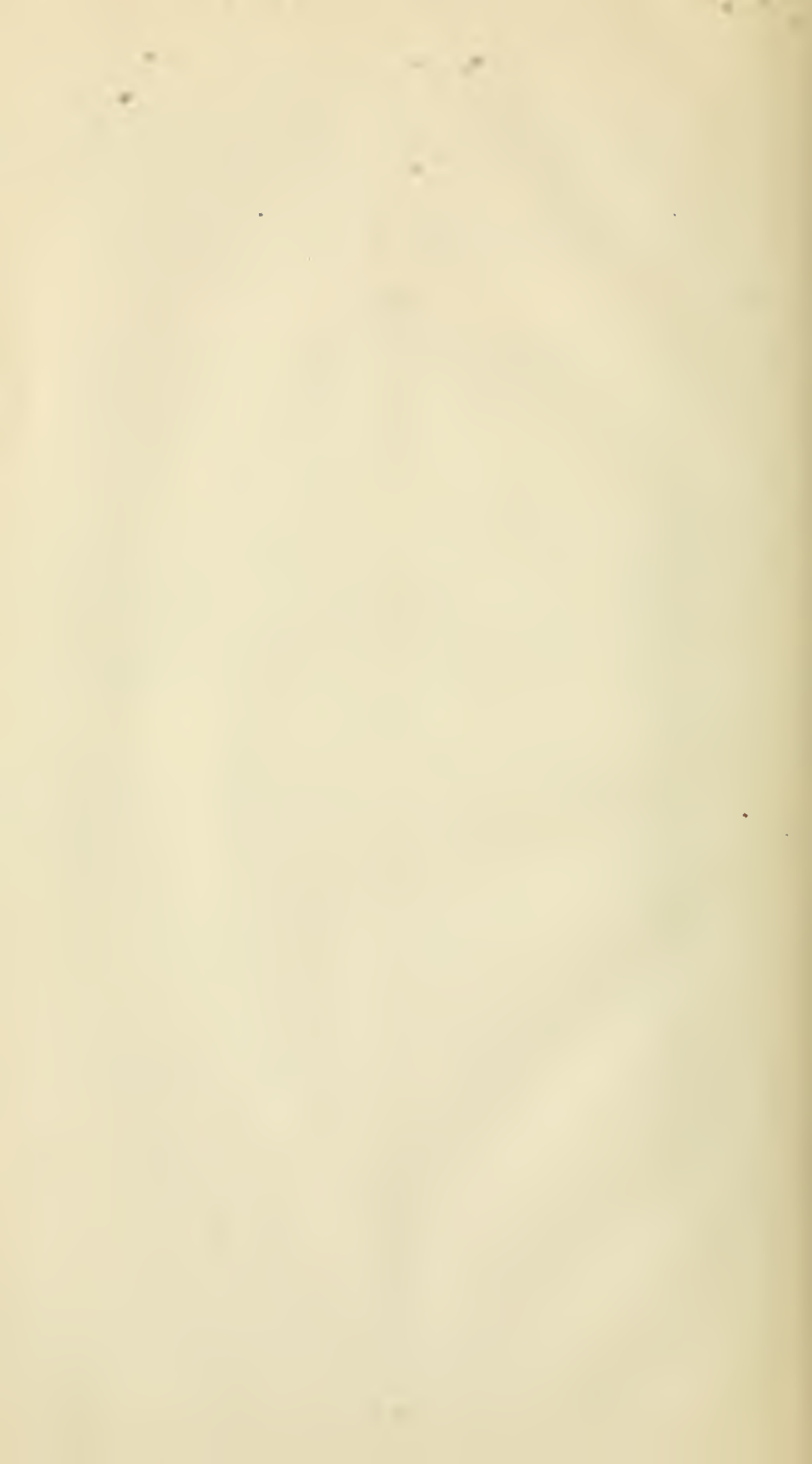


The men who, fifty years ago, presented their breasts to shield the liberties of their country, are fast passing away ; and of those who so nobly fought at Bunker Hill, very few survive to behold the present proud day. The following is a correct list of the survivors, so far as they could be collected from the best sources, as late as the afternoon of Wednesday last. Many of them held Commissions, and highly distinguished themselves by their bravery and gallant conduct :

GENERAL HENRY DEARBORN ; JUDGE GROSVENOR ; CAPT. R. TREVETT ; GEN. JOHN KEYES ; COLONEL JAMES CLARK ; MAJOR JOHN BURNHAM ; MAJOR DANIEL JACKSON ; GEN. B. PIERCE ; CAPT. BENJ. DANA ; COLONEL JEDUTHAN WEL- LINGTON ; LIEUTENANT HUTCHINS ; Messrs. JOHN BRAZER ; TIMO. THOMPSON ; NATHAN JOHNSON ; DEACON THOMAS MILLER ; JOSIAH CLEVELAND ; ROBERT STEELE ; ELIAS BACON ; DAVID HOW ; JOSEPH DANE ; AMAZIAH DICKER- SON ; DANIEL INGERSOLL ; FRANCIS MITCHELL ; WILLIAM DICKSON ; JOSIAH PIERCE ; JOSIAH HASKELL ; NATH'L IRV- ING ; JACOB FROST ; SAMUEL LAWRENCE ; DAN'L BROWN ; SIMEON TYLER ; FRANCIS GREEN.



To lay the Corner Stone of the Monument commemorative of this event, we again behold the beloved guest of our Nation—the noble LA FAYETTE,—a man who can appreciate the blessings we en- joy, for his blood and treasure flowed to obtain them. The gra- titude of the millions of freemen whom the last ten months he has visited, has afforded him a rich reward—a reward more accepta- ble to a noble mind such as his, than ought else could give. He now stands beside the survivors of that day—their veteran hearts mingling in emotions of delight, and seeming like the evening Sun, shedding their rays on that world which their influence as- sisted to arrest from the shades of ignorance and tyranny, and con- fer on it the enviable blessings of freedom and repose.—Be the evening of their days as bright and happy as is their country—a country which their brilliant exertions so greatly contributed to render prosperous, great and free.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 800 464 4

